

Chapter 16: Exam practice question**‘Single global super union within a decade’**

1 Explain what is meant by:

a a ‘single-union deal (or agreement)’ (2)

This is an arrangement whereby an employer recognises only one union for purposes of collective bargaining. Negotiations may therefore be simplified, as there will not be a diverse range of employee opinions in the negotiation.

b ‘collective bargaining’. (2)

This is the negotiation between employees’ representatives (trade unions) and employers and their representatives on issues of common interest such as pay and conditions of work. As the employees are represented as a joint force there is strength in numbers and individual workers are less likely to be victimised for standing up for their rights.

Apply **Resources table 3a** mark band descriptors.

2 Analyse **two** potential benefits to both workers and employees of a ‘globalised union’. (7)

Benefits chosen for analysis may include:

- more powerful collective bargaining power
- globalisation of worker rights
- challenges the global forces of capital
- allows negotiation with multinationals to prevent transfer of production to low-cost countries and exploitation of workers
- stops companies making changes to pay/rights in one country without consulting workers in other countries.

In order to be considered a full analysis, the negative consequences of each benefit stated must also be identified.

SL: apply **Resources table 1** mark band descriptors.

HL: apply **Resources table 2** mark band descriptors.

3 To what extent would any one multinational company be likely to be affected by the development of one large global trade union? (9)

Arguments for a significant effect on a multinational:

- Standardisation of pay and conditions could lead to higher costs and less competitiveness; therefore a multinational could not take so much competitive advantage of cheap labour, which could seriously affect profits.
- Negotiations may take longer and include a lot more international involvement.
- Every local grievance could turn into a worldwide problem.

- One set of negotiations may be a lot simpler than different negotiations in lots of different countries.
- Any acquisitions or mergers would mean a constant stream of change, which could complicate the whole process and interfere with external growth.
- Different local costs of living may be very difficult to take into account.
- Reduces the power of a multinational over its workforce.
- Any other relevant point.

Arguments for little/no effect on a multinational:

- In practical terms, different local laws and living costs may make the process very difficult to put into effect.
- In a recession unions may be happy just to have jobs for their workers so may not take advantage of global negotiating power.
- Job losses in one country could mean job gains in another and so the union may remain neutral.
- Any other relevant point.

SL: apply **Resources table 1** mark band descriptors.

(SL questions do not usually go up to 9 marks, so the HL table is best used for SL students.)

HL: apply Resources table 2 mark band descriptors.

A justified conclusion is needed for 9 marks.